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Farming in Partnership with Local Governments

GROWING together

BRITISH COLUMBIA

THIS YEAR, after consultation with British Columbians across the province, we released our new Agriculture Plan: Growing a Healthy Future for B.C. Families.

This exciting new framework outlines a vision for the future of the agriculture industry focused on promoting B.C. food products, making the agriculture industry a leader in reducing the impacts of climate change and reconnecting British Columbians with locally grown food.

One way we are promoting local food is by supporting farmers' markets. Farmers' markets are a tremendous boon to their surrounding communities, representing an annual value of more than $118 million to local economies. These markets represent the hard work of the people who produce our food and provide an opportunity to reconnect our urban populations with the rural ones while fulfilling the increasing demand for fresh and healthy foods.

We also need to increase public understanding of the importance of agriculture to our future – for local healthy food, and a greener environment for future generations. I encourage you as communities to continue to collaborate and partner with us to make the strategies in the B.C. Agriculture Plan a reality.

I look forward to working together with you to build a strong agriculture industry and a bright future for B.C. families.

STAN HAGEN
Minister of Agriculture and Lands

New Guide Helps Local Governments and Industry Work Together

AS THE population in B.C. continues to grow, a major challenge we face is effectively managing urban growth in a way that protects existing farm operations and provides opportunities for the agriculture industry to continue to play a role in feeding our population.

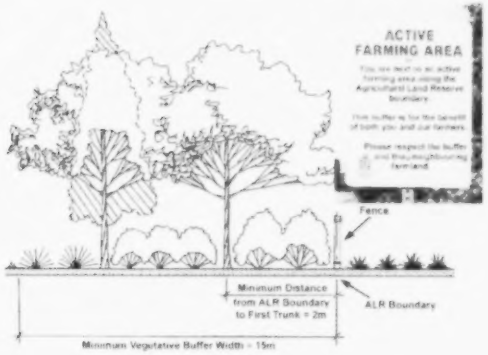
Part of this challenge is ensuring urban and agricultural land uses can successfully co-exist. In order to achieve high levels of compatibility, the urban-agricultural interface must be recognized as a distinct 'edge planning area' where specific policies and management techniques can be fairly applied to urban and agricultural land users alike.

The *Guide to Edge Planning* offers local governments and the agriculture industry tools that can be applied to the urban-agricultural interface.

"Promoting compatibility along the ALR edge is a shared responsibility of both urban and farm communities. Some tools to accomplish this include buffering, sensitive subdivision design and management of certain farm practices to minimize nuisance," said Bert van Dalfsen, Manager of the Strengthening Farming Program with the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

The Guide provides a broad range of information to assist in the development of official community plans, zoning bylaws and farm bylaws.

It can be found on the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands' website at: www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/publications/823100-2_Guide_to_Edge_Planning.pdf.


ACTIVE FARMING AREA
Fence
Minimum Distance from ALR Boundary to First Trunk = 2m
ALR Boundary
Minimum Vegetative Buffer Width = 15m

New ALC Compliance and Enforcement Team

IN SEPTEMBER 2007, the Agriculture Land Commission (ALC) established its first-ever compliance and enforcement team. Two uniformed compliance officers and one program coordinator conduct compliance, enforcement and monitoring activities to ensure land uses occurring in the ALR throughout B.C. are consistent with the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*.

"Our team is working with its local government partners and provincial ministries to ensure the preservation of ALR land," said Gordon Bednard, Compliance & Enforcement Coordinator with the ALC in Burnaby. "Already, the team has met with many local government representatives in the Fraser Valley, Okanagan and Vancouver Island and is planning additional meetings in the Interior, North and Kootenay Panel regions."

During the year, the team conducted 220 site inspections, had 70 land owners voluntarily correct non-compliance, issued 33 warnings, initiated 20 Stop Work Orders and have 107 ongoing investigations.

Did You Know?

Between 2001 and 2006, the amount of B.C. land being used for farming increased almost 10 per cent from 2,587,118 to 2,835,458 hectares.

Agriculture Statistics at Your Fingertips

The ***Agriculture in Brief*** is a two-page summary of farming in key B.C. communities.

The ***Agricultural Overview*** has 10 to 20 pages of more-detailed information.

These documents will be available at http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/Publications.htm

Kootenay Conference Inspires Local Food Security

THE FUTURE of Food in the Kootenays Conference was held in Nelson in November 2007. Likely the first event of its kind, the two-day conference addressed the issue of food security from a regional perspective.

The goal of the gathering was to educate community members, local and regional government decision-makers, farmers and food industry entrepreneurs about future challenges to the regional food supply and the increased need for regional food self-reliance.

"The conference was highly successful," said Andre Piver, a local doctor and one of the conference organizers. "Its recommendations form a very comprehensive set of requirements for a local food system. It led to several communities devising their own strategies to increase capacity to produce food locally."

One example is the Creston Grain Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in which three local farmers are

growing four naturally-grown grains for 200 shareholders.

Two regional organizations are carrying on the work of the conference: the Future of Food group (www.futureoffood.ca) and Kootenay Food Strategy Society (www.kootenayfood.ca). The conference proceedings can be found on the Future of Food website and some audio recordings are available on the Kootenay Co-op Radio program, Deconstructing Dinner, website at: http://www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner/fof.htm

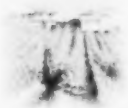
For more information contact: Don Low 250-402-6429 Don.Low@gov.bc.ca

New Study Looks at ALR in Kelowna

AGRICULTURE Land Commission (ALC) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands undertook a recent study to understand the impacts of the Agricultural Land Reserve in the City of Kelowna.

Agriculture is B.C.'s third largest primary industry, generating $2.4 billion annually in farm cash receipts and providing for approximately half of B.C.'s food requirements. Without the ALR, the extent and diversity of this agricultural economic sector would be at risk and much of the preserved agricultural lands that exist today would likely have been lost to ever-encroaching urban development.

From 1974 to 2006, 1868 exclusion applications were recorded in the City of Kelowna. If all applications had been approved, there would be a 37 per cent reduction in the ALR land area. [illegible] would result in a significant decline in the productive agricultural land base and economy in the region.



"This study demonstrates the effectiveness of the Agricultural Land Reserve in preserving Kelowna's valuable farmland and its associated agricultural industry," said Colin Fry, Executive Director, ALC.

The full review can be found on the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands website at: www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/ALP/publications/800100-3_ALR_and [illegible]

For more information contact: Karen Thomas 604-356-1804 Karen.Thomas@gov.bc.ca

Salt Spring Island Establishes Farm Plan

SALT SPRING Island's agricultural history spans over 150 years. Over the years agriculture on the island has faced such challenges as low product prices, labor shortages and high input costs and land values.

Recognizing this, the Salt Spring Island Agricultural Advisory Committee recommended a farm planning process be initiated to help secure the long-term viability of the island's food and agricultural activities. The planning process included input from the Salt Spring Island Farmers' Institute and Island Natural Growers, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and Islands Trust.

"Three separate Community Dialogue sessions were held," said Anne Macey, Project Administrator. "Participants discussed the scope of the problems facing agriculture in the community, identified a vision for food and

agriculture on the island and outlined how they hoped to get there."

The Plan, found on the Islands Trust website at: www.islandstrust.bc.ca/Itc/ss/pdf/[illegible]

makes recommendations aimed at creating a Salt Spring Island where agriculture is a strong, vital and productive part of the local economy, and is carried out in a manner that protects and promotes a sustainable community.

For more information contact: Rob Klose 250-356-2529, Rob.Klose@gov.bc.ca

Lake Country Adopts Community Agriculture Plan

HISTORICALLY, agriculture has played an important role in the District of Lake Country, with approximately 40 per cent of the municipal land base within the ALR. But with this land seeing continuous pressure for other uses, municipal leaders recognized the need for a community agriculture planning process.

The Community Agriculture Plan, was developed by a steering committee of the Agriculture Advisory Committee (AAC) in consultation with Lake Country area farmers, other industry stakeholders and interested members of the community. The Plan's purposes are to commit to protection of agricultural land and to realize the greatest economic benefit for the community and agriculture industry.

Roger Bailey, AAC Chair, said, "The Plan, when implemented, will give confidence to farmers about investing in their businesses, knowing there is land that can be farmed and adequate supplies of water for agriculture."

The Lake Country Council has endorsed the Plan; next, some of its recommendations will be included in the District's Official Community Plan. A copy of the Plan can be found on the Lake Country website: www.lakecountry.bc.ca/docs/Forms%20and%20Reports/Development%20Services/Agricultural%20Plan.pdf

For more information contact: Carl Withler 250-861-7528 Carl.Withler@gov.bc.ca

Metro Vancouver Hosts Regional Food System Dialogue

METRO VANCOUVER'S Agriculture Committee hosted a *Building a Resilient Food System* workshop in June to facilitate a dialogue on the key agriculture and food issues in the region.

Representatives from the Region of Waterloo's Public Health Department and the City of Portland's Office of Sustainable Development described their innovative projects to support local agriculture. Speakers from the region provided a glimpse into their role in the food system: Neptune Foods, BC Agriculture Council, Provincial Health Services Authority, Local Food First, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

The one-day workshop brought together the various interests in the food system including agricultural producers, students, food policy experts and public health officials for an engaging dialogue. Harold Steves, Chair of Metro Vancouver's Agriculture Committee stated, "We've received some great input from the workshop participants. It's a good start towards developing a regional food system strategy."

Speaker presentations and workshop proceedings can be found on the Metro Vancouver website at: www.metrovancouver.org/planning/development/agriculture/Pages/default.aspx

For more information contact: [illegible] 604-[illegible] Kenji.[illegible]@gov.bc.ca

Flavours of Surrey

ON JULY 27, 2008, the City of Surrey, together with the Surrey Farmers' Institute and the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, hosted its first outdoor food evening feature in the Historic Stewart Farm. Aimed at celebrating the diversity of Surrey's culinary culture, the event featured local chefs and businesses preparing tasty dishes with a focus on locally grown and produced ingredients.

Locally grown and produced ingredients were featured.

The event showcased the diverse farm products and cuisines offered in the Surrey/White Rock area. Many restaurants and eateries participated, along with a local brewery, gourmet coffee company and winery. Live entertainment and family activities further added to the well-attended event.

Surrey joins the growing trend, supported by the ministry, of focusing on local foods through events such as annual food festivals and ongoing summer farmers' markets.

Families enjoyed tasty treats and sunshine at the Flavours of Surrey annual food festival.

For more information contact: Kathleen Zimmerman 604 556-3068, Kathleen.Zimmerman@gov.bc.ca

Did You Know?

B.C. is first in Canada in sales of blueberries, cranberries, sweet cherries, apricots, and raspberries.

In 2006, 86 per cent of the raspberry-growing area of B.C. was in Fraser Valley Regional District.

Agroforestry Presentation at PIBC

GEORGE POWELL, of the BC Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative, gave an interesting presentation about the benefits of integrating agroforestry with agriculture at this year's Planning Institute of British Columbia Annual Conference in Prince George.

Agroforestry is the practice of blending agriculture, silviculture and conservation practices in the same land management system. Options for B.C. include shelterbelts, integrated riparian management, silvopastures, alley-cropping and forest farming.

These practices have several potential advantages including the capacity for production gains through more efficient use of available resources. Economic advantages come from blending different outputs from the same production system. As well, environmental services – such as providing wildlife habitat, managing fire risks and protecting soil, water and air quality, can be provided from these managed systems.

Mr. Jeremy Lamb, Lamb Company, Enderby, B.C., shows an example of agroforestry management to integrate livestock and timber production in their woodlot.

"Yet, despite these many advantages, agroforestry systems are not widely practiced in Canada," said Powell. "Changes to policy, official plans, legislation, and bylaws can help encourage and enable their use at appropriate locations."

For more information contact: Dave Semmler 604 556-3068, Dave.Semmler@gov.bc.ca

Study Finds Public Benefits of Farmland

IN 2007, the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Public Policy Program at Simon Fraser University conducted a case study to estimate the value of the public benefits of farmland.

Benefits to the local community include access to local food, greenspace, lifestyle and viewscapes, and benefits from riparian habitat, wildlife habitat and groundwater recharge.

Farmland is a managed environment, and little work has been done to estimate the value of its public benefits. To help land use planners make more informed decisions, the study looked at the benefits of one land-use over another.

For a good first look at this alternate way to view the value of farmland read *Public Amenity Benefits and Ecological Services Provided by Farmland to Local Communities in the Fraser Valley: a Case Study in Abbotsford, B.C.* on the web at: www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/publications/Public_Amenity_Benefits_of_Agricultural_Land.pdf.

Also contained in the report are interesting answers to survey questions such as, *"What do you think are the three most important benefits of having farmland in Abbotsford?"* and, *"If a farmland trust existed in Abbotsford, would you be willing to make an annual donation to preserve farmland?"*

For more information contact: Mark Redmond 604 556-3086, Mark.Redmond@gov.bc.ca

B.C. Farm Industry Review Board: Bridging the Urban/ Agricultural Divide

THE B.C. FARM Industry Review Board (BCFIRB) is an administrative tribunal operating under the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*. BCFIRB handles complaints from persons aggrieved by disturbances arising from farming operations, employing alternate dispute resolution processes whenever possible. BCFIRB may also study and make recommendations on broader farm practices issues.

Municipalities can participate in the complaints process, and may request farm practices studies. As an independent tribunal, BCFIRB aims to balance the needs of farmers and their neighbours and to protect the public interest in its decisions and recommendations.

The Board's website, www.bcfirb.gov.bc.ca, provides additional information on its mandate, filing a complaint, and previous farm practices decisions.

For more information contact: Jim Collins 250 356-8580, Jim.Collins@gov.bc.ca

Agriculture a Significant Economic Contributor

Data collected in the 2006 Census of Agriculture shows that farming is a significant business in many of B.C.'s 25 regional districts.

Regional District	No. of Farms reporting[1]	Total gross farm receipts (incl. forest products sold) Amount in $
Fraser Valley	2,567	592,425,274
Metro Vancouver	2,658	528,604,305
Peace River	1,899	237,595,743
Okanagan-Similkameen	1,601	225,501,492
North Okanagan	1,227	211,483,177
Thompson-Nicola	1,251	186,726,187
Central Okanagan	1,017	166,228,375
Cariboo	1,160	96,305,364
Bulkley-Nechako	889	54,630,348
Capital	991	54,261,663
Cowichan Valley	930	47,554,455
Fraser-Fort George	607	45,984,971
Columbia-Shuswap	624	40,394,904
Comox-Strathcona	497	30,975,655
Central Kootenay	562	30,004,374
Kootenay Boundary	390	23,442,296
Nanaimo	461	21,986,317
East Kootenay	390	15,570,846
Squamish-Lillooet	129	7,891,364
Alberni-Clayoquot	89	5,491,456
Kitimat-Stikine	134	2,667,339
Sunshine Coast	90	2,563,742
Powell River	82	1,901,838
Skeena-Queen Charlotte	87	1,108,264
Mount Waddington	76	833,991
British Columbia	**19,844**	**$2,651,963,167**

[1] Includes farms reporting zero receipts.

Funding Available for Emergency Planning

A REMINDER: Local governments in B.C. with a livestock population and an existing emergency plan are eligible for funding to assist in analyzing, upgrading and improving carcass disposal options and emergency protocols in the event of a natural disaster or disease outbreak.

[illegible]

Agricultural Land Commission Annual Report

ALR DATA and ALC panel decisions are summarized in the Agricultural Land Commission Annual Report for 2007/08, which is available on-line at www.alc.gov.bc.ca. For each of the six regional panels, the report has application statistics, some outlines of applications of public interest, and other key plans and regional issues. It explains the delegation of ALC decision-making to other authorities and the establishment of an appeal procedure for compliance and enforcement matters. The report also summarizes ALC initiatives to set guidelines for road and highway planning and other policies. Historical data on ALR land and the new, more precise area measurement using Geographic Information Systems are also in the report.

Total Areas in Applications (2007/08)

	Refused	Approved
Inclusion	4 ha	288 ha
Exclusion	1 [illegible] ha	1,720 ha
Net Change		1,432 ha

[illegible]

Growing Number of Agriculture Advisory Committees

[illegible] 2007 three new AAC's have been created, bringing the total to 35 (34 Agricultural Advisory Committees plus one Aquaculture Advisory Committee) serving 14 local governments across B.C. Fourteen AAC's serve regional governments and 21 serve municipalities, cities or a Gulf Islands Trust Committee.

LOWER MAINLAND (13 AACs)

- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible] *NEW*
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]

VANCOUVER ISLAND / GULF ISLANDS (11 AACs)

- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible] *NEW*
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]

INTERIOR / NORTH (11 AACs)

- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible] *NEW*
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]

Alternative Energy From Farm Waste

ANAEROBIC DIGESTION (AD) uses organic wastes, like manure, to produce biogas as an energy alternative to fossil fuels and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). Although it is a relatively unknown farming practice in B.C., it is common in Europe, U.S. and Asia.

In on-farm AD, a farmer collects his manure in a tank, and potentially adds some food processing waste like cooking oil. The mixture emits methane which is captured. The methane either replaces natural gas, gasoline, or diesel elsewhere, or is burned in an engine on the farm to create electricity.

On top of reducing fossil fuel consumption, AD diverts methane from entering the atmosphere where it has approximately 21 times the effect on the climate as carbon dioxide. In B.C., if 1/3 of all agricultural and food processing waste was used for AD, the reduction and diversion of GHGs could total approximately 100,000 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent per year.

Making AD a common farm practice in B.C. will take some work. Local governments can encourage AD on farms through their community plans and zoning bylaws.

Representative AD design in BC. Photo: Planet Biogas Solutions

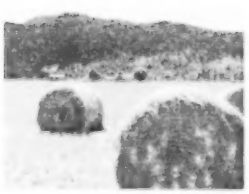
Biogas driven bus Photo: Gustav Rogstrand

To assist farmers, local governments, and other stakeholders, the Province has posted the BC Bioenergy Strategy and the Bioenergy Information Guide at www.energyplan.gov.bc.ca/bioenergy/, and two feasibility studies for AD in B.C., at www.bcic.ca [illegible]

[illegible]

Agricultural Advisory Committee Regional Workshops in Early 2009

Agricultural Advisory Committees (AACs) are important organizations that support and protect local agriculture. The ministry encourages their existence, and has held three biennial workshops to date for AACs from across the province to enable sharing of ideas and to discuss common issues.



To better accommodate the increasing number of AACs the ministry will host several regional AAC workshops in early 2009. Please stay tuned for the locations and dates.

Proceedings of previous AAC workshops can be found at: www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/aac/wrkshps.htm

[illegible]

Did You Know?

In 2006, Okanagan-Similkameen was the regional district with the largest areas of B.C. growing 8 types of fruits:

* Apples	1,920 hectares
* Grapes	1,714 ha
* Cherries (sweet)	668 ha
* Peaches	485 ha
* Pears	139 ha
* Apricots	105 ha
* Plums	104 ha
* Cherries (sour)	31 ha

and, total area of all fruits, berries and nuts: 5,305 ha